

THE
C A S E
OF
G. R. FITZGERALD,
ESQUIRE,

10 Lge

578 d 15
2

RECEIVED OF
Impartially Considered,

CHARACTER AND CONDUCT

VINDICATED

To which is added, a circumstantial Account of
the Premature Death of the late PATRICK
RANDAL M'DONNELL, Esq. in a GENTLE
LETTER from T. BRECKNOCK, Esq. now a
Prisoner in the Gaol of CASTLEBAR, to his
Friend in LONDON. *The whole never before
published.*

"I will a Tale unfold, whose lightest word
"Would harrow up thy Soul." SHAKSPEARE.

L O N D O N:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR,

AND SOLD BY R. JAMESON, N^o 227, STRAND, NEAR
TEMPLE-BAR; AND T. AXTELL, ROYAL-EXCHANGE.

MDCCLXXVI.

[Price One Shilling and Six-pence]



To the READER.

IT having been suggested, since the first publication of this pamphlet, that it was brought out under the direction of Mr. Fitzgerald, the Author solemnly declares, that he is not; nor never was, directly or indirectly, connected with that Gentleman; nor does the Author believe, that Mr. Fitzgerald has at this time the least knowledge of such a work being in agitation: And, moreover, the Author thinks it necessary further to assure the publick, that any transaction or anecdote relative to Mr. Fitzgerald herein mentioned, were not communicated to him by Mr. Fitzgerald, or by any person connected with him or his family, *the letter from Mr. Black-* *more excepted*, which was received only about ten days ago; and that was conveyed to him through the hands of a third person.

London, May 22, 1786.

I will take up the whole of the
World in my own hands.

W. D. N.

Printed by J. DODD, at the
Sign of the Anchor, in St. Paul's Church-yard, near
St. Dunstons, in the Strand.
[Price One Shilling and six Pence]

[4]

~~the good man, especially if he be~~
 in. The good man, especially if he be
 our friend, we are too much inclined to
 exalt into an Angel; and the bad man, if
 he happen to be our enemy, we are often
 too prone to degrade into a Devil.

C A S E

Of this deviation from truth and justice
 I am afraid the bulk of mankind are, in
 some degree, guilty, in forming a judge-
 ment of the character and conduct of
 for several years past, made to much noise
 in our sister-kingdom: to enable them,
 IMPARTIALLY CONSIDERED.

form a more true and just opinion of this
 unfortunate Gentleman, I shall, in the
 following pages, give an impartial account
 of the principal incidents and transactions
 of his life. It is an old and a just observation, that
 there is no such thing in this world as a
 character either perfectly good, or perfectly
 bad: that the best of men have their foibles,
 and, perhaps, even their vices; and
 that the worst man that exists is not en-
 tirely without some good qualities. I shall
 have one brother only, named *Charles*, who
 was *Ready*, however, as we all are to ac-
 knowledge the truth of the maxim in ge-
 neral, *Being contented, being contented,*

~~fieral, yet, in our application of it to par-~~
 ticular cases, we are but too apt to forget
 it. The good man, especially if he be
 our friend, we are too much inclined to
 exalt into an Angel; and the bad man, if
 he happen to be our enemy; we are often
 too prone to degrade into a Devil.

Of this deviation from truth and justice
 I am afraid the bulk of mankind are, in
 some degree, guilty, in forming a judge-
 ment of the character and conduct of
 George Robert Fitzgerald, Esq. who has,
 for several years past, made so much noise
 in our sister-kingdom: to enable them,
 therefore, to correct this error, and to
 form a more true and just opinion of this
 unfortunate Gentleman, I shall, in the
 following pages, give an impartial account
 of the principal incidents and transactions
 of his life, which are always connected
 with his present situation. There is no person
 of the name of George Robert Fitzgerald, Esq. who is the
 eldest son of the late ~~and~~ Fitzgerald, of
 Rockfield, Esq. which is distant about two
 miles from the town of Castlebury. He
 has one brother only, named Charles, who,
 of the two, was always considered as the
 greatest favourite of the Father, on the
 estate, however, being entailed, could
 not,

not, *legally*, be affected by *favouritism*; for, on the death of the Father, it became the sole property of George Robert: besides, there were some very peculiar clauses in the deed of settlement of this estate, which prevented the tenant in possession from committing any act that might injure the son who had the reversion. Amongst others, one was, that, as the leases expired, the lands were to be re-let for *lives*, or *years*, by *public advertisement*, to the *bighest* and fairest bidders.

But the Father, as will more fully appear in the sequel, not having been sufficiently exact in observing the deed of settlement; having, likewise, discovered the most evident intention of augmenting the fortune of the younger son at the expence of the elder; and having, by that means, created the most incurable jealousy between the two Brothers, has actually been the occasion of all the disasters which either have, or may hereafter happen to this distracted family.

Nor was Fitzgerald senior more happy in gaining the good-will or esteem of his neighbours; which, indeed, is the less surprising, as his character in private life was

never considered as of the most spotless kind.

A clear, unincumbered estate of THREE THOUSAND POUNDS a year procured him very little consequence, except amongst his numerous tenantry, who were his natural allies during a long, and sometimes bloody warfare, in which he was engaged with his eldest son.

By his Wife's relations he was equally detested. He married Lady Mary Harvey, sister to the Earl of Bristol, Bishop of Derry: but neither this lady's noble birth, nor her irreproachable and even exemplary life and character, were able to protect her from the barbarous usage she received from her lewd and libertine husband, and from which, therefore, she was obliged to take refuge in the Bristol family, and with her unfortunate son, George Robert.

In his Lady's stead he took to his bed a *Miss Norris*, the cause of much mischief and disturbance in the family, and who, with the deceased, M'Donnel, will make no inconsiderable figure in the course of this

this Narrative; in which I will never lose sight of the Poet's admirable maxim—

— Nothing extenuate,
Nor set down aught in malice.

SHAKESPEARE.

George Robert Fitzgerald, at a very early age, married Miss Conolly, sister to the Right Honourable Thomas Conolly, Member of Parliament for the county of Londonderry, and cousin-german to his Grace the Duke of Leinster. With this lady Mr. Fitzgerald received a fortune of TEN THOUSAND POUNDS; at the same time, old Fitzgerald executed a deed of settlement, by which he engaged to allow him a yearly income of ONE THOUSAND POUNDS—but, so far was he from fulfilling this agreement, that, instead of *a thousand a year, not one shilling* did he ever pay his son, from the day of assignment to the day of his death, (which happened in the city of Dublin only about three years ago) being a period of about fifteen years.

I have mentioned this circumstance, merely to shew that the late Mr. Fitzgerald had nothing to alledge in excuse for his not having made a suitable provision
for

for his youngest son, as a good and provident father might have done.

Soon after the celebration of Mr. Fitzgerald's marriage with Miss Conolly, the young couple went abroad. For some time they resided on the Continent*; but after an absence of ten years, during which Mrs. Fitzgerald died, leaving him one daughter only, who is still living, he returned to his native country in the year 1775.

I am informed—and the whole tenor of his conduct shews my information to have been well founded—that on George Robert's return, his Father refused to make any settlement with him for arrears, unless he would consent to a division of the estate, or a confirmation of those leases which the father had made to his youngest son. These conditions not having been complied with, on the part of George Robert, he

* The Author has no intention to swell this Narrative with Mr. Fitzgerald's celebrated exploits on the Continent, or elsewhere; he means to touch only on those facts which relate, or led to his present unhappy situation, or which have grown out of the disputes he has had with his own family, or his *aristocratic* neighbours.

he had no other remedy than to appeal to the laws of his country.

To the law, therefore, he made his appeal, and sued out a *custodium*, which empowered him to receive a proportional part of the rents of his father's estate, until his demands were satisfied. With his endeavouring to put the law in force, commenced his misfortunes: he found his father prepared for him, and determined to repel force by force; and this he was the more easily able to do, as he had a powerful tenantry, amongst whom was the unfortunate Mr. M'Donnel, lately murdered; nor had George Robert, to back him, at that time, or indeed at any other, a force sufficient to do himself justice in a legal way.

His disappointments and difficulties daily increased. Amongst other illegal acts committed by his father, during his absence, one was, the leasing out the lands to his favourites at an under value, in order, as much as possible, to lessen the income of the estate in future. There was one, in particular, made to Charles Fitzgerald, of a valuable tract of land at ONE SHILLING and SIXPENCE an acre, which was worth, to a farmer, for grazing, SIXTEEN SHILLINGS

LINGS an acre; and, not content with this shameful bargain, he also leased out the DEER PARK, to this favourite son, at the same price.

These transactions, which militated so much against his interests and fortune, and perpetrated too by his father directly in the teeth of the most solemn deeds and covenants, must have excited in Mr. Fitzgerald's breast, the most violent struggle between the principle of self-preservation and filial affection; which last, however, even in the most trying scenes, he did not forget, as the following anecdote fully evinces.

Mr. Fitzgerald, senior, had been arrested for a debt of EIGHT THOUSAND POUNDS, which the son was no way obliged, nor was the estate liable to pay; yet, notwithstanding the extraordinary ill usage he had received from his father, Mr. Fitzgerald released him from the spunging-house, by taking the debt on himself, and thereby gave him that liberty which he otherwise could never have obtained; for his estate being at that time under *custodiam*, and being, moreover, torn in pieces by the factions which he himself had created, the better to crush his son's interest and fortune, he

he was totally incapable of paying the debt himself.

It is well known, that where there are different claimants for rent, the tenants, who will surely take advantage of this circumstance, generally pay neither, under pretence, that if they should pay, they may do it to their own prejudice; consequently he must have remained in durance* vile the remainder of his life.

C

Let

* It is no uncommon thing, in Ireland, for the owners of large estates to linger out their latter days in this ignominious manner: having lived beyond their income, and thereby contracted debts, they go to gaol to practise œconomy. In this school they are first taught to set their creditors at defiance; and, what with the extravagance of the family without doors, and the urgent necessities of those within, no savings can be made for the unfortunate plaintiffs: thus the heir comes into a clear estate, on which he contentedly sits down, without ever paying for the clothes that hid his nakedness, his education, or the bread that fed him. This shews a depravity of morals, and the force of bad example; for instance, his ——— (although 26 years a ———) has never yet been advised to set about paying his Father's debts: on the contrary, the effects of both his Father and Mother were disposed of, and the money distributed, without any regard to this sacred obligation.

Let the fate of George Robert be what it may, this act of generosity to his principal and *avowed* enemy, and to his Father's creditors, will certainly preponderate in his favour.—Few people, I believe, situated as this unfortunate young gentleman was, but would have taken advantage of this accident, and thereby have turned the tables on the remaining part of the faction below, in his own favour, and who, for want of their Arch-leader, must easily have been brought to capitulate.

Had old Fitzgerald possessed one spark of honour, or of gratitude, exclusive of *the feelings of a Father*, all further violence must, after this transaction, have subsided; but neither the seeds of honour or of gratitude, nor those of parental affection, were ever discovered to have been sown in his frame—or, if they were, the soil must have been exceeding barren, or the fruit nipt in the bud.

The liberty which the son had so magnanimously given to his father, the latter ignominiously employed in fomenting greater discord between the two brothers than had hitherto appeared; insomuch that George Robert was obliged again to have recourse to the law, for an enlargement of his powers. He made an application

cation to the Lord Chancellor, setting forth the demand he had on his father, which then, including the 8000*l.* above mentioned, amounted to upwards of TWENTY THOUSAND POUNDS—also the obstacles he met with in receiving the rents, &c, &c.

Upon this application, the Lord Chancellor was pleased to make an order for his taking possession of the whole estate. This happened in the year 1780; about three years before the father's death.

To execute this order, was a service of no small danger: he, however, got possession of the mansion-house of *Rockfield* and the demesne, the father at that time residing in a lodge at *Torlough*, about an English mile from the mansion, (close to the high road from Castlebar to Ballina, and to the counties of Sligo, Leitrim, &c.) pretty much in the *centre* of the estate: but, in executing the order more generally, several severe conflicts ensued—there were irregularities and violence on both sides: certain it is, George-Robert got the worst of it in the end; for he was indicted for a riot, found guilty, and sentenced to *three years* imprisonment in the same gaol, where he at present lies, under a charge, I am sorry to say, of much greater magnitude.

By this legal decision, which was obtained against him in the year 1780, candour forces me to acknowledge, *appearances* are not in his favour. The impartial reader I hope—nay, I am confident—will make great allowances—Considering his then situation, and the host of enemies he had to contend with, the above conviction, to me, is not at all surprising.

As to the Lord Chancellor's order, had Mr. Fitzgerald attempted to take possession of an estate, with an order from the Bailiff of the next manor, it could not have proved less effectual, or have been held in more apparent contempt.

I will now, for a while, leave Mr. Fitzgerald in his confinement, under his heavy sentence, in order to examine past matters a little more fully; and first I shall point out the particular people, individually and collectively, whom we may reasonably call either his *avowed*, or his *secret* enemies.

The persons who properly ought to appear on the list of his *avowed* enemies, are, as I have already shewn—1st, his *own Father*—which, as Tristram Shandy says, was *tant pire*, so much the worse;—2dly, *Miss Norris*—which, to follow the
same

same author, was *tant mieux*, so much the better. To have this woman otherwise than his enemy, would have been much more disgraceful to him than all the sufferings he has already undergone, or may hereafter undergo, on her account. She could not be supposed ever to be otherwise—George Robert never saw her, but his honoured Mother's injuries came into his mind in such a lively manner, that he used to affront her whenever she came in his way. As I advance farther, this lady will appear to *greater* advantage.

The next person I shall bring on the carpet is the artful and pliant *Charles Fitzgerald*, who, like a mole, has, for years past, been undermining his Brother's property; and the better to accomplish his nefarious purposes, he could overlook the indignity offered to his Mother; nay, he descended to the meanest offices to please *Miss Norris*, and become the *fondlewife* to her spurious offspring, which was shrewdly suspected, and with great reason, to be the joint production of the *pious** confederacy.

4. The

* Mr. Fitzgerald, senior, professed to be very religious; he was frequently discovered by the servants on his *bare knees*, with his wig and clothes off,
at

4. The identical Mr. M'Donnel, whose catastrophe will ever remain an indelible disgrace to the police of the county of Mayo.

To this quadruple alliance, I may add,
as

at his private prayers. One of the girls took the liberty to expostulate with him, being afraid, she said, he would expose himself too much to the cold: his answer was, "I feel no cold, child—I *am wrestling with God*, to unite my sons in *affection*:—the loaf " (meaning the estate) is sufficiently ample for both, " if divided between them." The girl, archly enough, replied, " Ah! dear Sir, if that is all you " are praying for, put on your wig and your clothes, " and take your breakfast; for the prayers of the " whole world would not prevail on my young Master to give up his birth-right, or any part of it, " to Master Charles." What renders this story the more curious is, that this abominable old hypocrite, at the same time he was prostrating his *half-naked* body, apparently in the act of solemn worship to his Creator, was meditating a plan to set fire to the mansion-house, in which George Robert resided, the better to deprive him of all refuge on the estate; which plan he afterwards fully executed, in conjunction with the rest of the wicked confederacy. This felony was perpetrated after George Robert had relieved his Father from prison, by taking on himself a debt to a large amount, as already mentioned.

as his *avowed* enemies, the whole Roman-Catholic tenantry, as well on the Fitzgerald estate as on those in the neighbourhood. The Fitzgerald tenantry, having joined the old confederacy against the just claims of the heir-apparent, had no other chance of remaining in their farms than by keeping him out of possession.

George Robert's declarations, with regard to the Papists, were covered with no disguise;—his public advertisement, which had circulated through the kingdom, was a denunciation of vengeance against them. In this advertisement, he set forth that he would parcel out his *whole* estate in freeholds; and invited Protestants, particularly those from the North, to come and settle on it, merely, as he declares, to *create or strengthen his electoral interest in the county*, and thereby give all the assistance in his power to bring about a Parliamentary Reform, and relieve the people from the bondage they suffer under the aristocracy.

These sentiments, it is acknowledged, were not inserted in express words; but, considering the principles and spirit of his uncle, the Bishop of Derry, and which his nephew has strongly imbibed, no other conclusion can be drawn but that, as well
from

from public as private considerations, the Roman Catholic tenantry must *abdicate*, to make room for those of the Protestant persuasion.

To prevent this calamity, as they termed it, they had no possible means—having forfeited their leases by non-payment of their rents; so that their landlord had nothing to do to get rid of them but to seize their cattle, which, however, they in general saved him the trouble of doing, by moving them off to some remote part of the country, out of the reach of his drivers.

Having accurately, and also pretty copiously, stated to the reader the *avowed* enemies of George Robert, and their motives for their opposition to him, I shall, in the next place, treat of those whom I call his *secret* enemies; and these are, the *lordly* party of the *county of Mayo*. The Lords *Lucan* and *Altamont* were as much alarmed at Mr. Fitzgerald's proceedings, on account of their *public* interests, as others were for *private* considerations; and the more so, as *Sir John Brown*, of the *Neal*, had declared he would join young Fitzgerald, against *Mr. Cuff* and the whole *aristocracy*, whose several interests, united, had

had ever prevailed in that county; and I will venture to hazard a conjecture, that by this *secret* influence, in a great measure, was the conviction for the riot, in 1780, above mentioned, brought about.

The General Election was then only three years distant;—the ruin therefore of his consequence, for that season, was a consummation devoutly to be wished. What serves to corroborate more strongly this suspicion, and that it was made a political question, is, that the sentence of the Court against him for the *riot*, was so nicely calculated, as to expire just at the time when the General Election was expected to close.—It was, indeed, a circumstance much to be lamented, that Mr. Fitzgerald's impetuosity, on the one hand, and the workings of his family faction, on the other, rendered the effects, most happily for the Aristocracy, exactly such as the latter could have wished.

I find myself under the necessity of pursuing this subject a little farther, before I enter upon the matter of Mr. Fitzgerald's escape from prison—when acts of violence were committed, on both sides, which I shall hereafter set in a true point of view.

D

I shall

I shall, therefore, take up the business I am upon, by a retrospect to the time when George Robert *commenced Politician*, or rather, when his Father made an unsuccessful attempt to represent the county of Mayo in Parliament.

Bad men have often been singled out, and adopted by partizans to prosecute their designs, and thereby promote their interests or ambition. The justness of this remark, I believe, has been pretty well verified in our own metropolis.

Fitzgerald, senior, (who, in some respects, was the *Wilkes* of Ireland) being encouraged by the popular party, was induced to stand candidate to represent the county of Mayo at the General Election of Ireland, in 1775. The contest was very severe; victory, however, declared against him: but, having run the Aristocracy very close on the poll, his supporters had the most sanguine hopes of success, on a petition to the House of Commons; and a petition was accordingly presented; but after a trial, which lasted several weeks, the sitting Members were confirmed in their seats.

By

By this contest, however, the then strength of the several parties in the county were thoroughly investigated—from which a man of penetration and spirit, like George Robert, and whose estate was ample, well situated, and of singularly good quality, might, without vanity, flatter himself with turning the scale in favour of his family at a future period, without making any considerable sacrifice of his own property.

Some time after the above election, George Robert returned from France, and appeared in the political horizon like a star of the first magnitude; but he made no public declaration, that I ever heard, of his intention to stand for the county, until some little time before the Lent assizes, 1778, at which time the Parliament had five years to sit; and, unless accidents had happened, there could be no probable ground to expect a vacancy till the expiration of the above period: he was, however, determined to begin in time; and, for this purpose, such preparations were made against the said assizes, to be held at Castlebar, for his public entry, and to declare himself a candidate on the next vacancy, as would not have disgraced the entry of a Venetian Ambassador into Lon-

don. Every house in the town, that could be procured, and that was best adapted for the purpose, was procured, the better to enable this political phœnix to entertain not only the county, but the world in general, who chose to partake of his hospitality during the assizes.

Mr. Fitzgerald, well knowing that the publicans must suffer considerably by his intended banquet, as he proposed drawing the whole public into his own vortex—to remove every apprehension of this sort, generously compounded with them for all their *probable* losses, in the *lump*.

Never was imagination raised so high as on this occasion—nor was imagination ever more completely gratified, when the time arrived for realizing the scene: it was indeed a scene of grandeur, much to be remembered in the history of Mayo magnificence; such as before was never seen there, nor, probably, ever will be seen again, unless the same Gentleman should have the good fortune to prevail over his enemies.

The profusion and good quality of the viands were not more conspicuous and satisfactory, than was the superb and elegant manner

manner in which the entertainment was, *for three days*, conducted, and in which the high-spirited donor demonstrated, that, to the nicest sense of honour, of which Mr. Fitzgerald is particularly tenacious, perhaps to a fault, he joined the most refined taste, and a capacious knowledge for the display of brilliancy and magnificence.

The splendour exhibited in this village was scarcely ever exceeded in the capital—the capital might, in some degree, be considered as having emptied itself into the village. A string of cars, from the city of Dublin, of an amazing length, preceded the company, several days, loaded with the choicest articles the metropolis could furnish, necessary for the occasion:—to them succeeded, in proper order, cooks and confectioners, of different nations, sexes, and colours;—sempstresses—taylor—mantua-makers—milliners—perfumers—hair-dressers—musicians—fire-workers—players—shoe-blacks—and five times the number of beggars*.

On

* Beggary, and of course pilfering, is, in Ireland, far more predominant than in England; for, besides the young and idle, those who are past their labour, naturally take up their *meal-bag* and *milk-can*, in order
to

On the commission day entered the company.—Mr. Fitzgerald, in his dress, was adorned with a profusion of jewels*, and his

to follow this occupation, even though their children are in sufficient circumstances to afford them a maintenance. As regularly as the Judges go the circuits, so sure are innumerable beggars found in their train, even to the remotest parts of the kingdom. In their marodings through the country, they enter any house that is convenient to them, take a seat at the fire, and partake of what is going in the kitchen, in the eating way, with as little ceremony as though they were a part of the family. When their meal-bag is full, they sell the contents at the next market, the price for which, and all they gather, they generally hoard; for the purchase of clothes would injure their profession, as nakedness is the principle which excites charity. Apparently they are very inoffensive; but if any thing is exposed to their view, which they can take without the probability of detection, few people, I believe, would be answerable for their honesty. I am inclined to think, from the observations I have made, that, on the smallest computation, there are not less, in Ireland, than *one hundred thousand* men, women, and children, in the actual profession of beggary, who are maintained by the boundless hospitality of the country.

* Mr. Fitzgerald's jewels have lately been stolen from him. When his lodge at Torlough was destroyed

his train of attendants were as richly caparisoned as if he had been an Eastern Nabob: but, which was still more pleasing to the towns-people and gamblers, he was really

stroyed by the mob, the above, and many other valuables, to the amount of 23,000l. all fell a sacrifice to their fury; for which he has commenced a prosecution against the county of Mayo. The following is the inventory—

“ A casket, containing a complete set of diamond
 “ vest-buttons; a diamond loop and button for the
 “ hat; a family picture, set round with diamonds;
 “ two large emeralds; a hatband, ornamented with
 “ five or six rows of oriental pearls; a large engraved amethyst; a gold watch and chain, studded
 “ with diamonds; several other gold watches and
 “ seals; a great number of antique and modern
 “ rings; a pair of gold shoe and knee-buckles; a
 “ silver apparatus for shaving; several pair of silver
 “ shoe-buckles, and other jewellery work, to the
 “ value of 6030l. and upwards: also, a number of
 “ notes of hand, and other assurances for money,
 “ payable to him from sundry persons, to the
 “ amount of above 12,000l. and a promissory note
 “ of hand, drawn by an English Baronet of great
 “ landed estate, for 5000l. on which several years
 “ interest are due. He farther states a loss in specie; various rich suits of embroidered clothes;
 “ curious fire-arms, and books, to the amount of
 “ above 428l. more.”

really provided with a large sum of money to defray his expences, and for play. I was informed, the seat of his carriage was filled with guineas, sealed up in parcels of fifty each—for he played nothing under.

In short, there never was a man who wrought so forcibly on the people for the time. He candidly told the Freeholders, he did *not regret his Father's want of success*, on a former occasion—the cause of his defeat, he said, was owing to parsimony, and his many bad qualities; which causes he hoped, in *his* application, would be removed.

Preparatory to a vacancy, Mr. Fitzgerald gave notice that he intended to establish, on his estate, a colony of Presbyterians from the North, whom he proposed to make freeholders: and, as a farther inducement to them to come to him, he threw out a never-failing bait; he offered to lay out 500l. in erecting a meeting-house; and to settle 50l. *per annum*, and a house and land, on the Minister, whom themselves should choose to be their pastor*.

The

* This meeting-house was actually built, (I saw the shell of it, 1783) and, I am informed, George Robert

The introducing a new race of inhabitants, and of a sect too, whose principles were never known to be favourable to a proud Aristocracy, leaves no room to doubt that such an *innovation* would be presently *scouted*: it was so, in fact; for it was considered, by the *lordly* party, as a previous step to an overthrow of their power in the county, and a *parliamentary reform*; suggested, without question, by the Arch-in-cendiary, (as the Court faction called him) the Bishop of Derry; and was, in *their* eyes, nothing less than an attempt to *overturn the constitution*, both in *Church and State*.

Ridiculous as it may appear to an English reader, that a Gentleman's *making freeholders*, and thereby creating, from his own fortune, an *electoral* interest, with a view to improve his estate, the manufactory, and civilize country; and thereby promote, or assist in bringing about, a *parliamentary reform*, should be construed into an intention of *overturning the constitution*, in *Church and State*, yet in Ireland this was really the case; for in that country the *meeting* of the Freeholders, only to consider

E

of

Robert has recently appointed a Presbyterian Minister to officiate therein.

of a Reform of Parliament, has, from the Bench, been declared to have that tendency.

As an illustration of this subject, and as a farther proof that this doctrine is now held to be the fundamental law of Ireland, I shall adduce the opinion of COPPERFACE, a law chief, in his own words, as they were delivered in the case of a late High Sheriff of a county.

The author of a most ingenious pamphlet has, by several months, anticipated me, in his remarks on that case: he introduces the business of the Irish Parliamentary Reform, and quotes the case above alluded to; the determination of which is so extremely curious, and of so great importance, that I cannot withstand the temptation of repeating it in this place; more especially as I was present at the trial, and can vouch for the correctness of the Author's quotations; (they were printed in the Castle news-paper, as by the authority and direction of the Court) and I do most cordially, nay, devoutly, with the whole Irish nation, subscribe to the Author's remarks thereon.

I shall introduce this business in the Author's own words; and afterwards make

make such further remarks as are applicable to the case of Mr. Fitzgerald.

‘ Not a heart panted,’ (in Ireland) ‘ not a wish was uttered for any object but *a reform of parliament*. Great was the disease, but the *remedy* was greater. In the effort to set father against son, and brother against brother, the Ministry, and their emissaries there, provoked the revival of the most effectual animosities, that could not fail to *divide the people*, and infuse discord amongst the Irish.’

‘ But the comprehensive soul of the Minister grasped still more. “ I will conquer *America* in *Germany*,” said the EARL of CHATHAM; “ I will cut up the *English reform* in *Ireland*!” says the EARL of CHATHAM’S SON.’

‘ Whatever be the Reader’s political complexion, I beseech, I implore him, to read the *published speech* of Mr. Pitt’s newly-made ***** where he will find these precious points affirmed to be the law of the land—not by quirk or subtlety, but in home-spun intelligible terms—

‘ 1st, “ *That the power of the County is the power of the Crown.*”

‘ 2dly, “ *That the Sheriffs calling the people together peacefully and legally, IS THE MOST WANTON OPPRESSION OF THE KING’S SUBJECTS.*”

‘ 3dly, “ *That a reformation of parliament is, as plain as words can speak, TO OVERTURN THE RELIGION AND CONSTITUTION OF THE COUNTRY.*”

‘ 4thly, “ *That attachments are preferable to trials, because they are summary—because the WHOLE COUNTY IS CORRUPTED, and no jury should be trusted.*”

‘ 5thly, (which is a most holy doctrine, and the echo of the English plan, in destroying trial by jury) “ *That a trial by jury, of such charges, WOULD BE HIGHLY IMPROPER, because it would be running the hazard of CORRUPTING WITNESSES, and TEMPTING A JURY TO PERJURE THEMSELVES.*”

‘ Here you see, the foundation of this vaunted trial by jury is subverted, root and branch—for in every human litigation, there is a risk of perjury.’

‘ I know that constitutionalists may say this—If the published speech of the Irish Judge be spurious, *the publisher should lose his ears*—If the speech be genuine, the Judge should lose his life. The criminal justice of the country is endangered every hour that such a traitor to the Constitution pollutes the Bench; and the people, if they do not impeach him, are madmen, slaves, or cowards.’

The Author then ironically adds—‘ I am of a very different opinion; and it is a substantial cause of delight for *us* to reflect, that though the British Bench is barren of such characters, the Ministry have

‘ have *bleſſed* the Irifh Bench with a Judge who comprehends, in his own perſon, the nobleſt faculties of a TRESSILIAN, a SCROGGS, a JEFFERIES, &c.’

It is already well known, and ſcarcely needs repeating, that TRESSILIAN was hanged in the year 1388, for giving an opinion in favour of the prerogative, contrary to the ſpirit of the conſtitution.

SCROGGS was impeached by the Commons, in the year 1681, for acting nearly the ſame part as *Treſſilian* had done; and for unjuſtly proſecuting, as the Commons alledged, writers and publiſhers of pamphlets concerning the *Popiſh Plot*.

JEFFERIES, in the reign of James the II^d, would willingly have rendered the crown deſpotic: but, being thrown into the Tower, at the Revolution, he there killed himſelf with immoderate drinking, and by that means ſaved Jack Ketch the trouble of ſending him out of the world in a HALTER.

COPPERFACE* — whether this *ignoble*
man

* An Engliſh reader, we preſume, will not be diſpleaſed to hear ſomething more particularly concerning

man may not soon be added to the above list,

cerning this extraordinary Son of corruption—this pedlar of the law, and vender of legal fraud and non-sense.

His having descended from a low family, I consider as no disgrace to him. [It is worthy of remark that men of family, integrity, and abilities, seldom arrive to higher honours than to a *puisne* seat on the Irish Bench; and it is notorious that all their chief seats are at present filled with passionate, low-bred men, the Court of Chancery excepted.] As a Barrister, *Copperface* was never known to possess a single requisite which could stamp him a man of profession, unless it were low cunning, deceit, and the most consummate assurance.

In the year 1773 *Copperface* was elected, by his countrymen, after a month's poll at Candy's Tavern, *Humbucker-general* of Ireland.—The character of the man well justified their choice; for as *Humbucker-general* no man ever played his cards more dexterously. He has had the address to dupe every English Ministry, from the vice-royalty of *Lord Townsend* to the present, the short administration of *Mr. Fox* excepted. *Fitzgiggo*, alias, the *Alguazil*, or *King's Devil*, a notorious character, was his coadjutor.—Mark the treason of these venal ——— against their King and Country.—Each of them employed a printer. The one, in the pay of *Fitzgiggo*, declaimed against Government and the *curst* English interest—stirred up the manufacturers to riots and sedition, with tarring and feathering, and the like—called for a renovation of their constitution—independance—and the *election franchise to be given to the Roman Catholics*, &c.—Thus, whilst one blew the coals of disaffection, the other had a vehicle ready to quench the fire; at the same time they

cut

lift, and hung out as a scare-crow to deter future traitors to their country, depends only

cut out work for themselves in the law department by prosecutions innumerable; and made the King and people of England believe that, by their *joint* endeavours, they had quelled another Irish rebellion; which existed only in the fertile brains of *Fitzgiggo* and *Copperface*, and their emissaries.

The same abilities with which he waded through the dirty paths of the law, were serviceable to him in the senate. Though personally a coward, yet, in politics, he was a hero. In the House of Commons he could bully, under the protection of *privilege*; and had the courage to be first and last in every debate—that *by the dint of luck*, as he himself terms it, but what the world justly call corruption, barratry, &c. he has realized, from being worth less than nothing, a landed property of above 2000*l.* a year—has a patent place in the Irish E—— office, worth 3000*l.* a year more, which, with the produce of his last employment, makes his whole income little less than 10,000*l.* a year.

He was a short time A—— G——, but degraded by the Rockingham administration; which circumstance, by the by, was a strong recommendation of him to Mr. Pitt, and, no doubt, had its due weight in his appointment, which happened at a fortunate conjuncture too, for an old client of his Lordship's: but his adroitness in the *triple* capacities of Judge in a court, as a Peer, and *Pleader* in Parliament, and how far the present Ministry acted with this wretch in concert, to procure a determination of a *civil* suit, in favour of a creature of their own, who possessed a considerable Borough interest, must be deferred for discussion at a future period.

only on the stability of his creators—the present Ministry.

Such being the language of the Irish Aristocracy, delivered to the people from the Bench, it very naturally follows, that the attempt of George Robert Fitzgerald to clear his estate of its bad tenants, and to introduce a race of Protestant inhabitants, which, had he effected it, would have so much altered the affairs of the county of Mayo, was an innovation that might justly have ranked amongst those offences which are brought in review, in order to check the spirit of the people who were crying out for a parliamentary reform.

The High Sheriff called the people together, to consider of this measure, by public advertisement—Mr. Fitzgerald does the same, and creates new freeholders for this and other purposes; from all which, I will venture to assert, that the misfortunes of this Gentleman originate as much in his public spirit and liberality, as in the frauds and cabals of his own family.

But to return to *George Robert's escape from the gaol of Castlebar.*

To obtain his lost liberty, Mr. Fitzgerald ventured on a bold and a hazardous enterprise—an escape from his prison; which,

which, by the law of Ireland, is a capital felony.

After this escape, he erected a very formidable battery in his demesne, consisting of several pieces of iron ordnance. The battery was erected on an artificial mount, on which was planted a grove of trees, situated about one hundred yards from the high road, and the same distance from the gate of the avenue which leads to the mansion-house, and half an English mile from the house itself.

It would appear, however, that the hand of Providence, together with the villainy of the King's revenue-officers, had greatly favoured George Robert's very singular enterprise, and in some measure, no doubt, had determined his escape.

A large foreign armed ship (of what country I do not recollect) had been driven, by stress of weather, to the port of *Newport-prat*, a few miles distant from the town of Castlebar. The vessel had received so much damage, that she was obliged to be unloaded in order to give her a sufficient repair.

To assist the unfortunate mariners, the houses belonging to the King's officers, and others, were opened to *receive* the cargo, and the ship accordingly underwent a repair; but by the time she was in trim to take in her cargo again, a part of it was lost, and part spoiled; and that which remained, and was saleable, was not of sufficient value to pay the exorbitant *warehouse room* where it was deposited. On this account, the whole was confiscated; and in the mean time, the unfortunate Captain was inhumanly committed to Castlebar goal, where Mr. Fitzgerald was then confined, for the amount of the expences of the ship's repair—the consequence was, that she was obliged to be sold, with her guns and stores, to defray charges, and thereby release the Captain from prison*.

At this sale, Mr. Fitzgerald, by agents, purchased the guns and ammunition, under pretence of their being for the use of the
the

* This flagrant breach of hospitality, and of national honour, having been committed, not by the rabble, or wreck-hunters, but by the King's officers, the fraud and plunder was perfectly *innocent*; and, although it made some noise in the country, yet, these officers being all of them creatures of the *Lordly* party, it never came to an enquiry.

the Volunteers.—This accounts for his being able to erect so formidable a battery, and for its being so well furnished and maintained, as to alarm the Government, and to occasion them to send a train of artillery, with a regiment of horse, in order to dislodge the offenders.

On the approach of this force, Mr. Fitzgerald and his partisans all fled, and the troops again returned to their old quarters.

Mr. Fitzgerald, however, continued concealed in the country for some time; and it was at this period the confederacy at Torlough set fire to his house at Rockfield: after which, having good reason to suspect his Father and Miss ——— to have perpetrated this mischief, and finding it impossible to be much longer concealed, he, with an armed party, (at the time that he was himself an out-law) went to Torlough, and took his Father prisoner.

Having placed his Father in a post-chaise, and a strong guard on the outside of the carriage, in this manner he led him, as if in triumph, a captive through the country, and at last brought him to Dublin, where he died soon after; and George

Robert himself was taken by a Captain Hall, who, on that account, received the reward of three hundred pounds, which the Government had offered for apprehending him.

Mr. Fitzgerald was committed to the New Prison in the city of Dublin, and remained there a considerable time—until the administration of Lord Temple. His Excellency granted him a pardon, on condition—as I am well informed—that Mr. Fitzgerald would never, from thenceforth, either accept of, or send a challenge to fight a duel, and that he should give his word of honour for his future good behaviour.

From this circumstance, I am led to the relation of a *fracas*, which, after his discharge, happened between George Robert, a Mr. Martin, (son of the unfortunate Mr. Martin of Dangan, who was defrauded by Popham*, the money-scrivener) and a Mr. Lester.

At

♦ This celebrated swindler having cheated Mr. Martin, and several noblemen and gentlemen of Ireland, out of 60,000*l.* set off for the East Indies; and is the identical *Mr. Popham* who makes such a conspicuous figure in the published Defence of Mr. Hastings.

At the trial of Mr. Fitzgerald for the riot before mentioned, Mr. Martin was of Counsel for the prosecution, and in his pleading threw out some very severe reflections against the Prisoner, and also against the Prisoner's Father: in drawing the comparison, however, between the characters of the Father and the Son, he concluded, that George Robert was the worst character of the two.

Mr. Fitzgerald, however, took occasion, when he made his defence, to retort on Mr. Martin, with such pointed severity, that the Barrister insinuated he would resent it at a *proper* opportunity.

As soon therefore as Mr. Fitzgerald was discharged from his imprisonment in Dublin, by Lord Temple, Mr. Martin sent Mr. Lester with a challenge to him.

Mr. Fitzgerald, on receiving the message, asked Mr. Lester if he had not heard the injunction laid on him by Lord Temple. Lester replied, he had heard of such a thing, but knew not if it was true; and if it was true, did not imagine he, Mr. Fitzgerald, would avail himself of such a ridiculous injunction.

Mr.

Mr. Fitzgerald, having secured *the written message, sent by Mr. Martin, safe in his pocket*, was determined to inflict instant punishment on the unfortunate Lester—in doing which, it must be acknowledged, Fitzgerald acted with a subtlety not usual to him in affairs of honour*.

Seeing a very brilliant ring on Mr. Lester's finger, Mr. Fitzgerald said to him—"I think, Sir, you have a very fine ring on your finger." Lester, very unsuspectingly, took the ring from his finger, which the other politely received, as if to look at—but, *designedly*, let it fall on the floor; and, setting his foot on it, he crushed this valuable ring to atoms. Mr. Fitzgerald then picked up the shattered contents, with more than ordinary attention—put the stones and the gold into a piece of paper—twisted them up, and put them into Lester's pocket, with the following Jesuitical address:—"Perhaps, Sir, you will say I robbed you—but you see I have not." After this, he opened the parlour-door, and desired the servant to bring him his *crab*, meaning his walking-stick. When the crab was brought

* I relate this story agreeably to Mr. Lester's report of the transaction.

brought to him, he began a most violent assault upon Mr. Lester, and so dexterously did he brandish his *crabstick*, that he made poor Lester both sore and bloody; and, in this very frightful condition, turned him headlong out of his house, to be the laughing-stock of the populace, who, by this time, had gathered about the door in great numbers.

Mr. Lester, with his wounds bleeding, immediately went to the house of Judge Hen, before whom, after reciting every aggravating circumstance, he lodged an information for an assault; and a warrant issued to bring Mr. Fitzgerald before the Judge.

When that gentleman appeared there, the Judge was going to commit him; upon which Mr. Fitzgerald took from his pocket the written message which Mr. Lester had brought to him from Mr. Martin. This paper he shewed to Mr. Hen; and when the Judge had read it, he suspended the *mittimus* against Mr. Fitzgerald, and immediately committed poor Lester to Newgate, for having brought Mr. Fitzgerald a challenge from Mr. Martin.

Upon

Upon Lester's arrival at the prison, he was become so horrid a spectacle, that he appeared to be a much fitter object for an *infirmary*, than a gaol.

The next day, the combatants gave bail to appear at the quarter-sessions—but the affair, I believe, was amicably adjusted, for I never heard any thing more about it.

Mr. Fitzgerald and Mr. Martin afterwards met, and fought a duel, in which neither party received any hurt.

It has often been said, and is generally believed, that all the many rencounters in which George Robert has been engaged, were owing to a disorder in his brain, which is, moreover, said to run through the whole family: to this aspersión, I answer, with Isabella in the play—

“ Little do they know him.”

I am confident Mr. Fitzgerald would not be obliged to me, or to any other person, who would attempt to justify his conduct on this ground.

His literary talents are, I believe, but little known to the world, as he never wrote

wrote much; and what he did write was only for the perusal of his most intimate friends.

I remember to have seen a small poem, with his name prefixed to it, consisting of about *four hundred* lines only, which was thought to display a brilliancy of wit and depth of learning, together with an excellent turn for *double-entendre*.

This poem was entitled *The RIDDLE*, and inscribed to *John Scott, Esq.* now *Lord Earlsfort*, and Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench in Ireland. It having been written in the form of a *Riddle*, more cannot be said of it in this place; and as an edition of it will soon be published, I shall not at present anticipate, nor deprive the curious of the pleasure of expounding the contents.

Mr. Fitzgerald possesses a fund of legal knowledge, and is also a very good orator. He harangues in the courts of law, and does his own business, with little or no aid of Counsel. Not long ago, he singly pleaded his own cause in the court of Exchequer, in an harangue of three hours, to the astonishment of the Bench, and a numerous auditory, against a great bar of lawyers, and had the good fortune to get the better of them all.

G

It

It is time my Narrative should now draw to a close. I have industriously avoided saying too much in Mr. Fitzgerald's favour; my motive having been principally to inform the world that although he appears, by what has been published in the news-papers, relative to a recent transaction, greatly to have erred, yet Mr. M'Donnel was by no means *in-offensive*; on the contrary, he gave Mr. Fitzgerald the *first* provocation and cause of quarrel.

Mr. Fitzgerald's property is little, if at all, inferior to that of any Gentleman in his county; and yet, although he was armed with legal authority, he could not raise a shilling off the estate, except what Mr. M'Donnel, and the rest of the Turlough faction, could not prevent.

He stood alone, surrounded by a host of enemies, against which neither the laws, nor the police of the county, afforded *him*, in any one instance, the least protection. His personal safety, his property, and even the jointure payable out of the estate to Lady Mary Fitzgerald—his all was at stake.

What a melancholy prospect was presented to the view of even an uninterested spectator, like myself—to behold the most lovely and inviting tract of land which Ireland can boast, one year in a high state
of

of cultivation, and the next a desolate wilderness! *

The deceased Mr. M'Donnel may justly be considered as *a volunteer* in the service of old Fitzgerald, of Charles his son, and of Miss Norris. He busied himself in a family quarrel, which, without his assistance, was arrived to a pitch not easily to be quelled.

He acted as an *incendiary* at the head of the *tenantry*, to keep the lawful claimant out of his right, and the heir from the possession of his undisputed fortune—augmenting his distresses, and those of his virtuous Mother, at least as far as his advice and active influence could possibly extend.

The late Mr. M'Donnel, though bred to the law, was himself but one remove from a *Papist*: his father read his recantation, for the sole purpose of filing a bill of discovery to obtain a property no otherwise his right than by his becoming a Protestant. This trick is often practised in Ireland; but I never knew a family that turned Protestants from so base a motive,

G 2

that

* Dr. Ellison, the rector of the parish in which the Fitzgerald estate lies, has, for several years, lost from one to two hundred pounds a year, by the desolation of that estate, in the article of *tithes* only.

that did not have frequent Mass privately said in their houses. I humbly apprehend that had Mr. M'Donnel been a virtuous man, (being moreover a lawyer too) he would not have taken so unworthy a part as he has done, against George Robert, let his connections with old Fitzgerald have been ever so binding.

“But,” say some, “Mr. Fitzgerald, by his own impetuosity and vindictive disposition, has involved himself in his present situation.” — Good Heavens! search the habitable globe, and will you find a man who could suffer the injuries that he has endured, and not be roused to vengeance? To be stripped of his inheritance—his house and furniture destroyed by fire—not by accident, nor by any common calamity, but by the base hands of his own Father, and a perfidious W——e, who assisted in raising up a faction to rob the eldest son, and thereby aggrandise the fortune of the youngest, (for nothing less would satisfy George Robert's enemies)—did not transactions, such as I have related, call loudly for vengeance?

But, again, it will be said, “Mr. Fitzgerald is violent.” I have sufficiently shewn that he has only opposed violence to violence—against those only who have violated the laws of their country by fire and sword:

sworn: no * *peaceable* man, that I ever heard, has any complaint against him.

But,

* I am informed, that Mr. M'Donnell was beset by no mob—he was apprehended by a warrant, issued against him for some offence committed against Mr. Fitzgerald; and that, under the said warrant, the constables were conveying him to a distant magistrate; and had proceeded with him some distance from Torlough before the melancholy affray happened; as no justice could be obtained against M'Donnell (or against any other person who resisted the laws, or, who committed depredations on Mr. Fitzgerald's property), from any of the magistrates in his own neighbourhood. For this reason it was that the unfortunate veteran *Brecknock*, when arraigned, a few days ago, at *Castlebar*; on being asked *how he would be tried?* remained at first silent; and being again asked, whether he would be tried God and his country? passionately cried out, "I have no objection to be tried by GOD; but not by YOUR country."

N. B. The above Mr. Brecknock is the celebrated gentleman of that name, who is well known in the republic of Letters; and who, some years ago, figured in the political controversies that were carried on in the *Gazetteer* during the life time of the late worthy Mr. *Charles Say*. Mr. Brecknock also rendered himself very remarkable and popular, a few years since, by going into the Court of *King's Bench*, and personally informing against all the Judges of that Court for *wearing Cambric*. On this extraordinary occasion Lord Mansfield said to Mr. Brecknock, "*how will you prove that we wear Cambric?*" "My Lord," said Brecknock, "I have sworn it, and it now remains with your Lordships to prove

H

"the

But there is not, in that part of Ireland, any such thing as either law or police: a stronger proof cannot be given of the barbarous disposition of even the better sort of people, than the plundering the foreign vessel, and her distressed Captain and crew, at Newport-prat. The whole province of Connaught, the county of Sligo excepted, is in as wretched a state of barbarism and bigotry, as it was two cen-

“the contrary.” The Court, however, finding themselves not sufficiently learned to overthrow Brecknock’s arguments, paid him the fine without investigating the matter further. By this notable action Brecknock created great diversion in the Hall, at the expence of the Judges, and obtained great credit with the people in general.

On another occasion he also shewed great cleverness—By some means Brecknock found out, that an estate belonging to the late *Cardinal Wolfey* was not possessed by the lawful heirs; he therefore advertised in the News Papers, both at home and abroad, desiring *the heirs of the Cardinal to apply to him, as he could inform them of something greatly to their advantage.* This proceeding so alarmed the person in possession of the estate, that, to stop the advertisements, Brecknock, it is supposed, was quieted by a sum of money.—This eccentric genius is now law-agent to Mr. Fitzgerald, at a salary, I am told, of 300 l. a year, I sincerely hope his wonted cleverness will not forsake him on the present occasion, but that he will be able to extricate both himself and his employer from the unhappy situation in which they are now placed.

turies ago; nor can *any* man of property live longer in peace there, than whilst he has a faction, or the military, to support him in his legal possessions. When a man is encompassed with *vipers*, little time is allowed him for *parley*.

Upon the whole, therefore, whatever may become of George Robert, the dreadful catastrophe which has happened to one of the parties in dispute, Mr. M'Donnel, must have one good effect—it is an awful lesson to mankind—and I hope will prove a salutary warning against interfering in the family quarrels of their neighbours.

Mr. Fitzgerald is soon to appear before his Sovereign in his courts, and his country—I therefore, in the language of the law, charitably hope, and in this I trust I shall be joined by every unprejudiced reader, that “*God may send him a good deliverance.*”

times ago; nor can any man of property live longer in peace there, than whilst he has a faction, or the military, to support him in his legal possessions. When a man is encompassed with wretches, little time is allowed him for study.

Upon the whole, therefore, whatever may become of George Robert, the dreadful catastrophe which has happened to one of the parties in dispute, Mr. M'Donnell must have one good effect—it is an awful lesson to mankind—and I hope will prove a salutary warning against interfering in the family quarrels of their neighbours.

Mr. Fitzgerald is soon to appear before his Sovereign in his courts, and his country—I therefore, in the language of the law, charitably hope, and in this I trust I shall be joined by every unprejudiced reader, that God may send him a good defence.

IT was my intention to have closed my narrative here, till the trial of the prisoners was over, and I had actually done so: I have, in pretty strong colours, shewn the original enmity between the parties--- Mr. Fitzgerald's character, and his unexampled misfortunes,---which was all I proposed to perform at present. But since the publication of the foregoing sheets I have received a letter, through the hands of the publisher, written by Mr. Brecknock to his sister; which letter I have thought it expedient to give to the publick in addition. To this I am the more inclined, as the day of trial is near at hand, and the seat of justice so remote, that no undue influence can possibly result from the previous publication of a state of the transaction itself in this country.

Mr. Brecknock appears to have been overwhelmed by his misfortunes; inso-much, that those who know him must recollect the fire and spirit of his writings to be very different from what we find in

in the following melancholy epistle; but great allowance will, no doubt, be made by an indulgent and humane publick, for circumstances and situation.

In full confidence, however, that Mr. Brecknock has had a regard to *veracity* in his narrative, I willingly become his editor; for, as Boileau says, in my mind

Rien n'est beau que le vrai, le vrai seul est aimable.

“Nothing is beautiful but Truth,

And Truth alone is lovely.”

A LET-

L E T T E R
F R O M
MR. TIMOTHY BRECKNOCK,
I N
CASTLEBAR GAOL,
T O

His Sister in London, dated April 15, 1786.

MY DEAR SISTER,

I Write this letter to you for many reasons: In the first place, had I directed it to Mrs. Brecknock, it would (as I am informed) have been stopped and opened at the Post-office in this town. In the next place, I did not know at what place I could direct to her; and, thirdly, I thought that a true statement of a case, which hath been so grossly misrepresented, both in England and Ireland, would not be unwelcome to you, and my family,
to

to each of whom I desire you will communicate this letter when you shall have read it.

You are then to know, that early in the month of May 1785, Mr. Arbuthnot, an Englishman, who is appointed (by the Linen-board) inspector-general for the province of Connaught, in which the county (of Mayo) lies, came one morning to visit Mr. Fitzgerald; knowing him to be a great encourager and promoter of the Linen-manufacture.

The purport of this visit was to request Mr. Fitzgerald's assistance in serving a number of warrants (not less than 400), which Mr. Arbuthnot, by order of the Linen-board, had brought with him from Dublin, in order to be served on several people in this neighbourhood, charged with either having actually defrauded the Linen-board in the article of premiums, or charged with perjury as accomplices in the said frauds.

Mr. Fitzgerald readily consented to give every assistance in his power to enforce the laws of the country, and having personally assisted Mr. Arbuthnot in apprehending one of the townsmen of Castlebar, the whole

whole town became on a sudden his implacable enemy; for they could not foresee whose turn it would next be to be apprehended, nor where the effects of these warrants would end.

It now became necessary, for their own preservation, to prevent Mr. Fitzgerald, if possible, from being one of the Grand-jury at the then next ensuing assizes. The first step taken by one of their townsmen was, that of robbing a car of his, in which was a chest containing some fire-arms, four hundred and twenty guineas in cash, seventy pounds worth of new broad silver-lace for liveries, and many other articles to a great amount. Warrants were accordingly soon granted to apprehend the robbers.

In about a fortnight after the above robbery, three Castlebar men came to Torlough in the day-time, armed with fire-locks, and, advancing towards his dog-kennel, shot his most favourite setting-dog.—This kennel is about thirty yards from the coach-house. Mr. Fitzgerald's head groom was standing there, when one of the three persons levelled his firelock at the groom also, and brought him to the ground.

Warrants were soon also granted for apprehending these men; which still more enraged the town of Castlebar against Mr. Fitzgerald; and consequently he, and every one who had any connections of amity with him, must either be taken out of the way, or they themselves must undergo their trials at the following assizes. How to prevent Mr. Fitzgerald from being upon the Grand-jury, was the principal point they had to bring about; and the method they took was this: Mr. M'Donnel, who was a magistrate of the county, an attorney, and an under-tenant of Mr. Fitzgerald's, made oath, that as he was riding by Mr. Fitzgerald's house one night, between the hours of nine and ten o'clock, he, Mr. M'Donnel, was fired upon, and most desperately wounded by the said Mr. Fitzgerald, or by six other persons, whom he charged to be in the house at that time: one of these persons was myself, at that time fast asleep in my bed; and four of the six neither were in the house, nor were there any beds for them; but every one of the other four persons constantly bedded in their own houses. You see the intent of swearing against all the persons in, or supposed to be in, Fitzgerald's house, was to prevent him from having any witnesses

nesses whatever. Accordingly, at the then ensuing assizes, we were all indicted.

Mr. Fitzgerald stood his trial without so much as one evidence to prove that neither he, nor any person in the house, had fired any pistol. And it was God's good pleasure, that the very witnesses which this Mr. M'Donnel had adduced gave contrary evidences; and even M'Donnel contradicted himself so, that the judge presently saw through the wickedness of the whole prosecution, and directed the jury to bring in a verdict of "not guilty;" which they did immediately; and thus I was preserved by the hand of Providence from being tried at that time.

If you ask the reason, why this magistrate and attorney, M'Donnel, took so active a part against Mr. Fitzgerald, myself, and his whole family, I must tell you, that he was underhand concerned in the robbery of the car above-mentioned, and that he had *received and converted to his own use* the four hundred and twenty guineas, the silver-lace, fire-arms, &c. &c. and thus it became equally necessary, for the safety of his own life, that Mr. Fitzgerald should be prevented from sitting on

the Grand-jury. I should also have told you, that this M'Donnel who prosecuted Mr. Fitzgerald, myself, and others, for the pretended shooting and wounding him so desperately, being required to shew this same wound in open court, there did not appear the least wound, contusion, nor any vestige of that sort, although only four days had intervened between the pretended shooting, and his exposing his pretended wound to the court. Nor, indeed, could there possibly have been any wound; for the pistol, which M'Donnel swore was loaded with leaden bullets or leaden slugs, was actually loaded with little bits of turf, as one of his own witnesses positively swore, which said witness is a bitter enemy to Mr. Fitzgerald.

But Mr. Fitzgerald, and those in his family, being thus honourably acquitted, caused the trials of the robbers, shooters, and defrauders of the Linen-board, to be postponed to this last assizes. In the interim, however, M'Donnel and the townsmen of Castlebar were not idle; for the present, they must either silence him and his friends, or they would be tried for their lives, and for the pillory themselves. With this view, M'Donnel, who had been tried at the Easter assizes before, on a charge of burning

burning certain houses, and of forging certain leases of land, pretended to have been granted to him by the two Miss Dillons, whose land-steward he was, and having gotten over that trial, much against the satisfaction of the judge who tried him, had been pursued by the Miss Dillons in a Court of equity, and, being under several contempts of that Court, at last attachments came down to take him in custody; but, to avoid being so taken, and to give an excuse for not appearing to the said attachments, he got a wound to be made in the calf of his leg, and under colour of this wound he got himself excused from personally appearing to the attachments, alledging, on oath, that it would endanger his life were he to go to Dublin; however, in two days after, he was able to take a journey, upon better business, of forty or fifty miles going and returning. When I say he got a wound to be made; I make not the assertion upon my own knowledge, it was the common report at Torlough; and I suppose the *real truth* will come out, when Mr. Fitzgerald shall stand his trial. On the credit, however, of this wound, M'Donnell not only gained an excuse for not appearing personally to the attachments above-mentioned; but he made oath, that three of Mr. Fitzgerald's

tenants

tenants had fired upon him, under the counsel, command, direction, or influence, of Mr. Fitzgerald. Accordingly these three men surrendered themselves to a magistrate; and they were bailed, for Mr. Fitzgerald, upon hearing his tenants were falsely charged, ordered them to be bailed, and, notwithstanding they were thus bailed, M^r. Donnel, as a magistrate, committed one of them. He was released by another magistrate; upon which, M^r. Donnel confined him in a *private house*, without a colour of law, for the space of eighteen days: after he was enlarged from this confinement, he charges, upon oath, that M^r. Donnel offered him three hundred pounds if he would swear that Mr. Fitzgerald had ordered him, or directed him, or counselled him, to shoot the said M^r. Donnel. The man was resolved not to perjure himself, and so refused the promised bribe of three hundred pounds.

I should have observed to you, that one Andrew Gallagher, an apothecary in Castlebar (a name I shall have occasion hereafter to mention), accompanied with three other persons, came in the dead of night, forced open the last-mentioned man's house-door, shot a pistol at him in his house (his wife being then in bed, and within a few

a few days of being brought to bed), forcibly carried off the man to Castlebar gaol, and robbed him (as he charges) of the only voucher he had in his possession, in proof, that he had voluntarily surrendered himself to a justice of the peace, and had given sufficient bail for his appearance to take his trial at the then ensuing assizes.

The above narrative is introduced to shew you how and what enemies Mr. Fitzgerald had created to himself in Castlebar, by endeavouring to enforce the laws of his country against such capital offenders. I come now to inform you upon what ground, and what charge, I came to be involved in these affairs.--- On Monday the 20th of last February, Mr. Fitzgerald received intelligence, that Mr. M'Donnell, against whom a warrant had been granted for imprisoning one Murphy (a tenant of his) in a prison-house, without law, and for threatening and erecting a gallows in the said house, if said Murphy would not swear that Mr. Fitzgerald had ordered, directed, or influenced the said Murphy to shoot at said M'Donnell, and also for said M'Donnell's repeatedly endeavouring to suborn, by the temptation of 300 l. the said Murphy to perjure himself,

self, by making oath, that the said Mr. Fitzgerald had ordered, directed, or influenced him so as aforesaid:---intelligence was likewise received, that the above-named Andrew Galhager, who had *burglariously forced* open the said Murphy's house, and had then perpetrated such other acts as above-mentioned, was in company with said M'Donnel, as was also one Charles Hipson, against whom a warrant had been granted, as one of the three persons, when Mr. Fitzgerald's head-groom, and favourite setting-dog was shot before his own door. On this intelligence, Mr. Fitzgerald gave the three warrants for apprehending the said M'Donnel, Andrew Galagher, and Charles Hipson, to his head-constable, who, together with six or eight assistants, came up to the said three persons, but, instead of apprehending them, was dared to execute his warrants. The constable, finding himself not in sufficient force, sent to Mr. Fitzgerald, requiring more aid. Accordingly Mr. Fitzgerald, accompanied with eight or ten more of his tenants, went to the assistance of his constable; when, upon his appearing, the armed party, who had taken the field to protect M'Donnel from being taken, took to their heels, and left M'Donnel, Andrew

drew Gallagher, and Charles Hipson, to shift for themselves; who, after having expended their little ammunition, and slightly wounding six or seven of the constable's assistants, surrendered themselves prisoners. They were, between five and six o'clock in the evening, conducted to Mr. Fitzgerald's house, when an express was immediately sent off to the nearest magistrate, with orders, that if he should decline coming to the charge of the prisoners, then to proceed with all diligence to another magistrate, about eighteen miles distant, who had granted two of the said warrants. About one o'clock the next morning, the express returned, with reasonable excuses from each of the said magistrates not coming to Torlough. Early the same morning, the constable with eighteen or twenty assistants set off with his three prisoners, in order to conduct them to another magistrate, about ten miles distant. Out of respect to the commission which Mr. McDonnell bore as a magistrate, he was permitted to ride his own horse, and excellently well mounted he was. But they had not proceeded more than five hundred yards when the discharge of four guns were heard. A messenger soon arrived, and informed Mr. Fitzgerald, that a party of M. McDonnell's

K

people

people had lain in ambush for the purpose of effectuating a rescue; adding, that this party had fired upon Mr. Fitzgerald's party, that they had mortally wounded one of the constable's assistants (he died of his wounds the third day); that they had also wounded seven or eight more of the assistants; and that by the said firing they had killed McDonnell and Charles Hipson, two of the three prisoners; and that they were returning to Torlough-house with their third prisoner, Andrew Gallagher. On his arrival at Torlough-house, a messenger was dispatched to Castlebar, to another magistrate, to come and take the said Gallagher under his charge. This magistrate not only excused his coming to take charge of this prisoner; but a thousand false reports being instantly circulated in the town of Castlebar, another Gallagher, of the said town, who is brother to the prisoner Andrew Gallagher, and also one of the coroner's of the county, having a writ for 110*l.* in his possession against Mr. Fitzgerald, seized this opportunity as a colour for calling forth a military aid: this magistrate, I say, came at their head, attended also by a mob of seven or eight hundred people from Castlebar. The magistrate and coroner announced the reason of their coming, and demanded admittance.

tance. Mr. Fitzgerald having a great many valuable effects, such as jewels, family papers, linen cloth, &c. had ordered the street-door to be locked, until he should have secured them in the best manner he could. This took up about twenty minutes, when, to the great surprise of myself and a minister of the gospel, who was then in my bed-chamber, at the window full in front of the military, and the civil magistrate at their head, we saw them wheel off to about three hundred yards distance, leaving the enraged coroner at the head of the more enraged mob from Castlebar, to act just as their fury might stimulate them to do. In a moment's time this mob and coroner began firing at the windows, doors, and every other part of the house, smashing every pane of glass into shivers, at last forced open the street-door, and without warrant, writ, or other process of law, the coroner seized me and the clergyman by the collar, conducted us down stairs, and delivered us into the hands of a person who attended the mob, and who, I suppose, struck with the gravity of my appearance, consecrated (as it were) by the well-known manner of my life I here lead, which is that of a primitive Christian; and thinking, perhaps, that some respect was due to a minister of the Gospel, this man,

who I since am informed is a surgeon of Castlebar, led me and the clergyman, by the providence of God, through the savage mob unhurt, and delivered us into the hands of the magistrate at the head of the military detachment, who were at the distance of about three hundred yards from the house, yet still in sight of the outrages perpetrated by the riotous mob. Mr. Fitzgerald, in eight or ten minutes, was also brought under the conduct of the coroner, who delivered him also to the magistrate; and then we marched to Castlebar, three miles distant from Torlough, guarded by the military to the door of the county gaol; into which Mr. Fitzgerald was first ushered; and then the magistrate, addressing himself to Andrew Galagher (the person I have already mentioned as having been apprehended on a warrant for a high species of felony), and asking him if he had any thing to alledge against me, he gave for answer, that he had put his head out of a broken window in the house, and had heard me say to Mr. Fitzgerald, "*take care your prisoners do not make their escape*;" and on this verbal, idle charge, was I handed by the said magistrate into the gaol, on Tuesday, February 21, 1786, where I have continued ever since; and what will surprise you more is, that we had not
been

been in the county gaol above two hours, when the sub-sheriff came to us, and informed Mr. Fitzgerald, that he displaced the former Gaoler, who had been keeper of the gaol for eight or ten years before, and had appointed in his stead the very person in whose *private* house Murphy had been *without law* confined for eighteen days, and in which house a gallows had been erected to terrify the man to perjure himself, though without effect, as I have already observed; immediately as the sub-sheriff made this notification of changing the gaoler, Mr. Fitzgerald answered in these remarkable words, "*then mind, Mr. Sub-Sheriff, I never go out of this gaol alive.*" He had scarce uttered these last words, when six men rushed into the apartment where we both were, and first knocking down the sentry (who was placed in the room at Mr. Fitzgerald's request, in order to protect our persons) they then fired upon him with a carbine, and six or seven pistols, and kept running him through his hands and other parts of his body with their swords, and cane-stick-swords, and not contented with this more than savage barbarity, they also kept hammering his skull with the but-end of their pistols, till they left him for dead upon the floor, such a spectacle as, perhaps, never was seen in
any

any civilized country before, his head, skull, face, and hands, being one clot of blood, and when his wounds came to be dressed they were forty-six in number.— In this unparalleled act of violence, one of the (intentional) assassins levelled his pistol at me, much fire came from the flint, but the pistol did not go off; on this he presented another pistol at me; it went off, and I received the whole contents of the discharge upon my left arm just above the elbow, but it gave me no other sensation of pain than what I should have felt, had a half-spent tennis-ball been stricken against my elbow. It instantly occurred to my idea, that the angel of God had interposed between me and the pistol, and deadened the force of the charge just enough for me to feel it, for the special purpose of my acknowledging the divine intermediation and protection; accordingly, I instantly threw myself upon my knees in fervent devotion to God, through my Mediator Jesus Christ, and I remained in that position the whole time they were butchering my companion; but (marvellous to relate), not one shot more was aimed at me, nor did I receive the least hurt.— You will see the temper, or rather the disposition of the times that epidemically prevails in Castlebar at present, when I tell
 2 you,

you, that Andrew Galagher the apothecary, and William Galagher the coroner, were two of these (intentional) assassins, and that they were permitted peaceably to walk about the streets for three weeks, and no magistrate or other person had the courage to arrest them, but they are now in custody of the gaoler, not within the gaol, but in his own private-house.—I should also tell you, that another of these (intentional) assassins was one of the persons who robbed Mr. Fitzgerald's car, as I have already mentioned, who is since embarked for America.—Our trials were to have come on last Wednesday. Mr. Fitzgerald was brought into Court upon a feather-bed, supported by six troopers; but, as he was too weak and infirm to give any *continued* account of things, the trial is put off to the last day of May, when a special commission is ordered to try us, with twenty more of Mr. Fitzgerald's tenants, who were assistants to his constable; and at the same time are to be tried the five remaining (intentional) assassins.—This is a concise state of the case.—I now take my leave, and am, &c. &c.

T. BRECKNOCK.

F I N I S.

